



Silver Bay Design Project

University of Minnesota

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In late July, 1989, the University of Minnesota's Center for Community Studies was approached by a representative of the East Lake Community Project Future Steering Committee about working with its Silver Bay Outer Drive Citizen Action Team to help develop a plan to beautify Outer Drive. While the potential for enhancing Outer Drive was initially identified in 1985 by the Governor's Design Team, the more recent addition of a state Veteran's Home and renewed community interest generated by Project Future warrants a new look at options for improvements. Recent funding from the Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board (IRRRB) has made immediate action by Silver Bay possible.

Silver Bay is already engaging the community in projects for Outer Drive: volunteers have cleaned up the wooded areas; children have planted flowers along the boulevard; and plans are underway to create the "flag knoll", a display of American armed services flags, along Outer Drive near the new Veteran's Home.

Through the Project Future Community Self Renewal Program in 1988-89, a community vision statement for the year 2010 was developed and adopted. The East Lake Community vision statement calls for a respect for the natural beauty of northeastern Minnesota and for an attractive entrance to all communities. For Silver Bay, well-coordinated

improvements to Outer Drive are a crucial part in reaching this vision.

In the spirit of providing fresh interpretations of the community's vision, this project was undertaken in August by the University's Center for Community Studies and Landscape Architecture Department in response to the community's request.

Project Purpose

The role of this project is to explore and illustrate design alternatives to improve the community image of Silver Bay. Specifically, the project addresses two efforts of Silver Bay: (1) to improve the landscape of the Outer Drive Corridor; and (2) to develop a community sign system.

To be most effective, each project Silver Bay undertakes should be within the context of an overall community image strategy. Therefore, the alternative design concepts begin with overall schemes for coordinating all improvements along Outer Drive, from the construction of new buildings and installation of additional lighting, to pathways, plantings and integration of signs.

Three alternative design concepts have been prepared for Outer Drive in conjunction with a concept for a community entry sign. While the three proposals show specific designs for using plants, rock and other landscape elements, they are intended as preliminary ideas, not blueprints for construction. Silver Bay can use the design ideas presented here to encourage community interest and discussion and to build consensus. After further consideration and refinement of the ideas, the community is urged to work with professionals to develop implementation plans.

Project Process

The project began in mid-August 1989. Representatives of the Silver Bay community met with two graduate students from the University of Minnesota on August 23 and September 8. These meetings allowed the students to concentrate their efforts on the specific areas the community wished to focus upon. The areas of focus include Outer Drive, from the intersection with Highway 61 to the shopping center, the creek bed running along Outer Drive, the "flag knoll" area and a community sign, which is to be placed on the intersection of Outer Drive and Adams Boulevard, and visible from the Highway 61 intersection. From these meetings and the students' insights, design ideas were developed which combine the values expressed by Silver Bay residents, the fresh viewpoints of the students as

visitors to the town, and the collective design training of the students and their advisors. Based on the overall design concepts discussed with community representatives on September 8, the students developed the designs for Outer Drive, the flag knoll area and the community sign that are presented here.

Project Participants

Two graduate students in Landscape Architecture, Paul Damon and Dan Nadenicek, under the direction of Professor Roger Martin have developed the ideas presented here as a community service project sponsored by the Center for Community Studies (CCS). Project administration was provided by Peggy Sand who directs the work of CCS.

Thanks are extended to members of the Outer Drive Citizen Action Team who met with the students and to the Minnesota Extension Service's Project Future program for their financial support for the project. Any questions or concerns regarding the project can be directed to:

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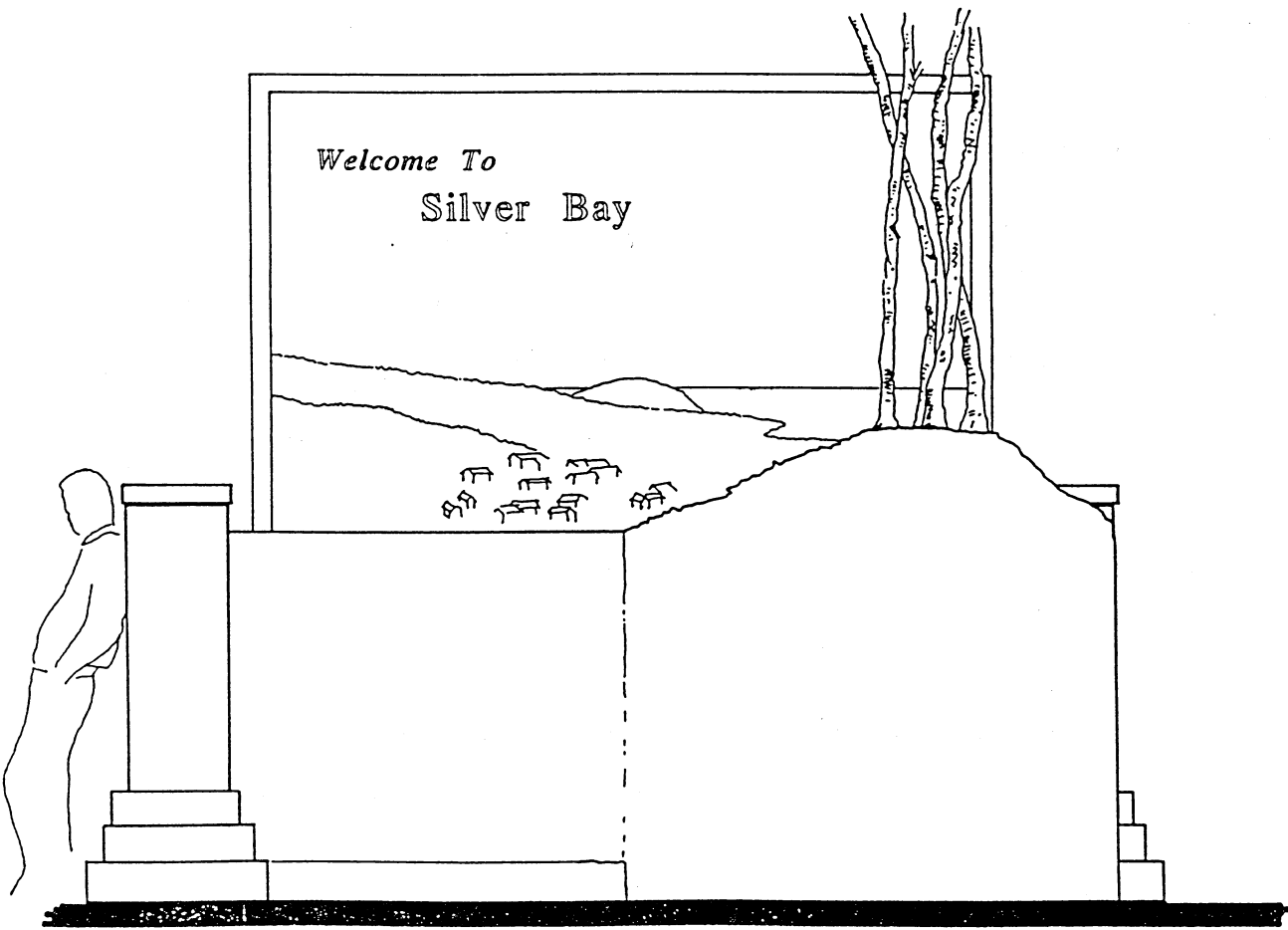
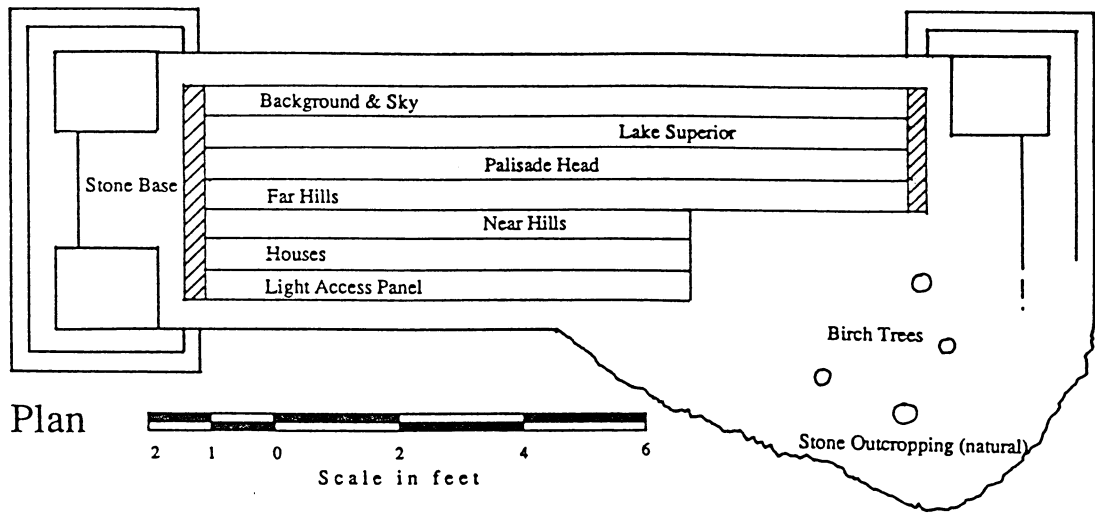
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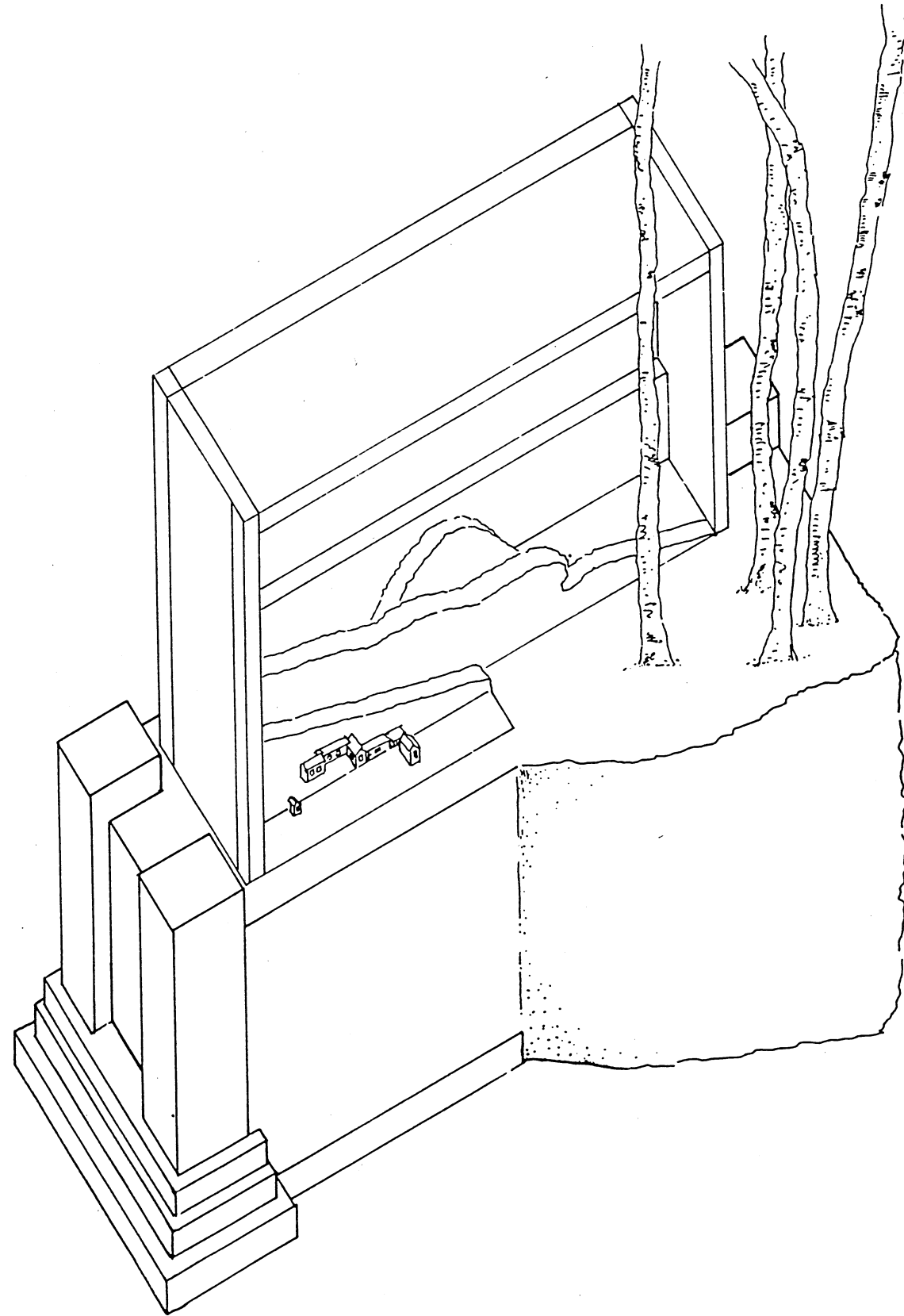
The Image

Minnesota's North Shore offers the largest fresh water lake in the world, massive outcroppings of Duluth gabbro rock, Superior sandstone and native birches and evergreens. It is visited annually by thousands of people who come to enjoy these natural features. In contrast to other communities along the north shore, Silver Bay is nestled into the hills above the lake, instead of along the water's edge. Silver Bay appears comfortably contained within all of the natural features that bring visitors to the region every year. This unique relationship to its surroundings can best be viewed after driving up the hill on Outer Drive and looking back toward the lake. That relationship can also be seen from Superior Vantage, a large hill which provides a sweeping view of Silver Bay and its surroundings. The image one receives of Silver Bay from these views is a community "nestled" into its surroundings. Silver Bay's unique relationship to its surroundings will be referred to as the "nestling" theme. This theme is important to the approach taken to the conceptual development of design alternatives for Outer Drive, the flag knoll site adjacent to the Veterans Home and the development of a sign system for the community.

The Sign

The concept for a community sign system was developed directly from this nestling theme. The sign provides visitors with the image of Silver Bay as seen through the eyes of its residents. It is an image of Silver Bay "nestled" into the natural features of the area. An example of a sign that uses the nestling concept is presented here. The sign is three dimensional and constructed of the natural elements found in Silver Bay. The base is made of the local stone, cut into masonry blocks for part of the sign base, and used in other parts in a natural uncut state to simulate the weathered rock outcroppings of the area. Appearing to grow out of the stone outcropping are simulated birch trees, which stand in front of the layered wood images of the houses, hills, Lake Superior and Palisade Head. The sign is to be well-lit at night, including lights twinkling from the windows of the houses in the sign. The sign is intended to be large, in this drawing it is approximately 7.5 ft. wide x 12 ft. high. A smaller sign will be difficult to see from the Highway 61 intersection, and it is important that visitors to the area are able to see and identify the nestling image as belonging to Silver Bay. This image can be repeated throughout the community sign system, perhaps in two dimension form only, or varying changes in the size and shape of the sign. It is important only that the theme, or image, of the sign be carried out through the entire sign system.





Axonometric view of community sign illustrating layered method of construction for a three-dimensional sign.

Three separate design concepts have been developed for Outer Drive. Each concept includes a different design for the flag knoll area and a planting concept for the area around the community sign.

The first concept for Outer Drive is called the *formal* concept. The name comes from the use of native plants in formal, or ordered, planting configurations. Near the intersection of Hwy. 61 and Outer Drive, native birches and firs are planted on equally spaced intervals, making a grid of trees. This will help to draw attention to Outer Drive from the intersection because it is an unusual formation for these native trees. This formal planting design is again used in both the flag knoll area and the planting around the community sign. A closer look at the flag knoll area will illustrate the relationship between this concept and the nestling theme.

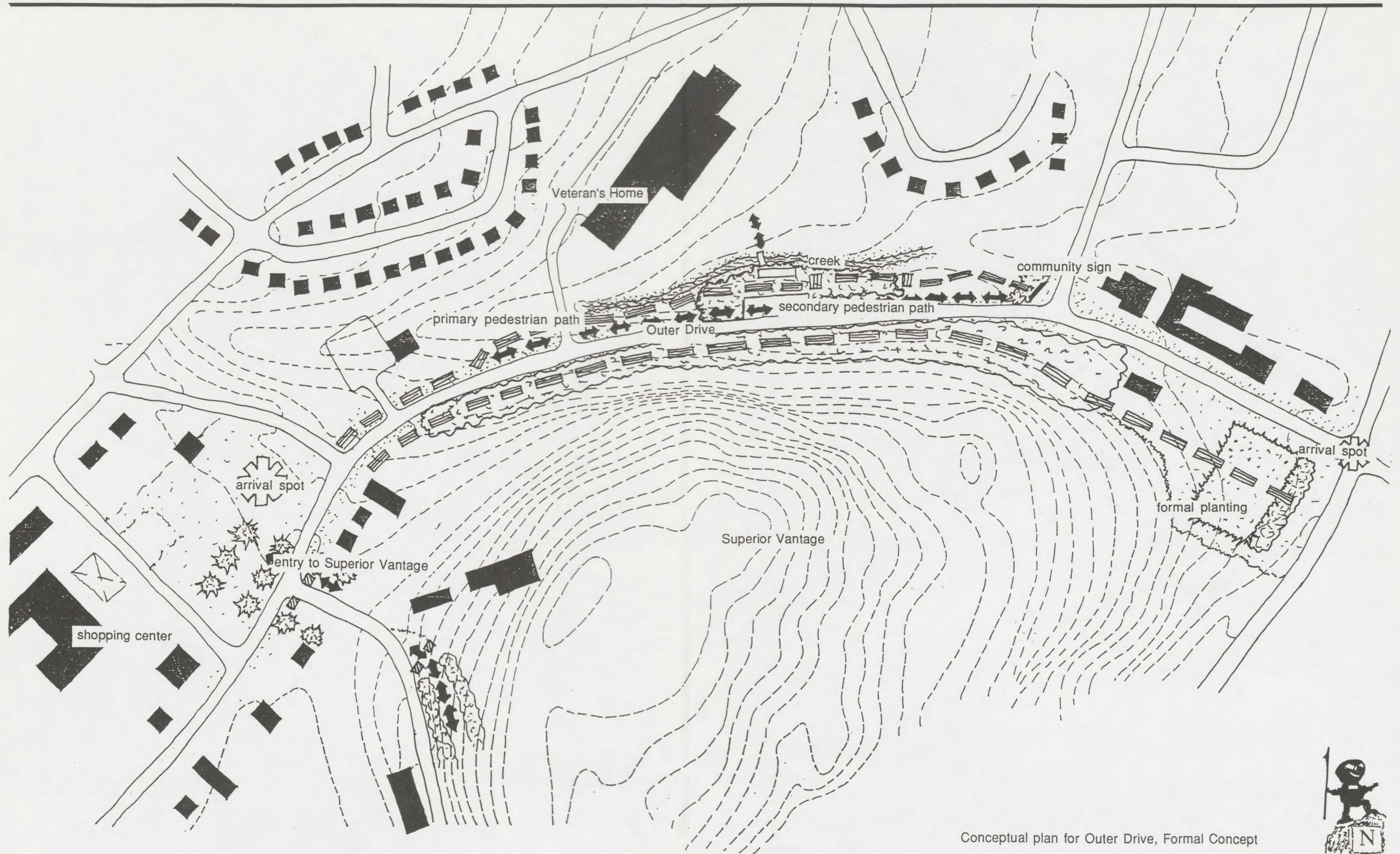
Cities, including Silver Bay, are settings where humans have carved out a place to live in the wilderness. Residents have provided shelter for themselves with structured places, buildings and homes. Silver Bay is a city where the structured elements, the buildings of the community, are seen nestled inside of the wilderness, the natural environment. The formal design concept for Outer Drive is based upon the same idea. Within the natural environment of the flag knoll area, one finds gridded plantings and formally controlled outdoor rooms that are representative of the Silver Bay community found within its natural environment.

Carrying this concept up Outer Drive into the community, trees planted on a grid are again used to call attention to the entry into the city. The area between Outer Drive and the shopping center will have a place for visitors to look back towards the lake, fulfilling the promise of the image made by the community sign. Native trees are also used to create an entrance to the trail leading to Superior Vantage.

The formal concept also calls for the primary pedestrian walkway to be routed directly through the flag knoll area. There will be sidewalks on both sides of Outer Drive, with the sidewalk on the south side of the street lined with two rows of trees.

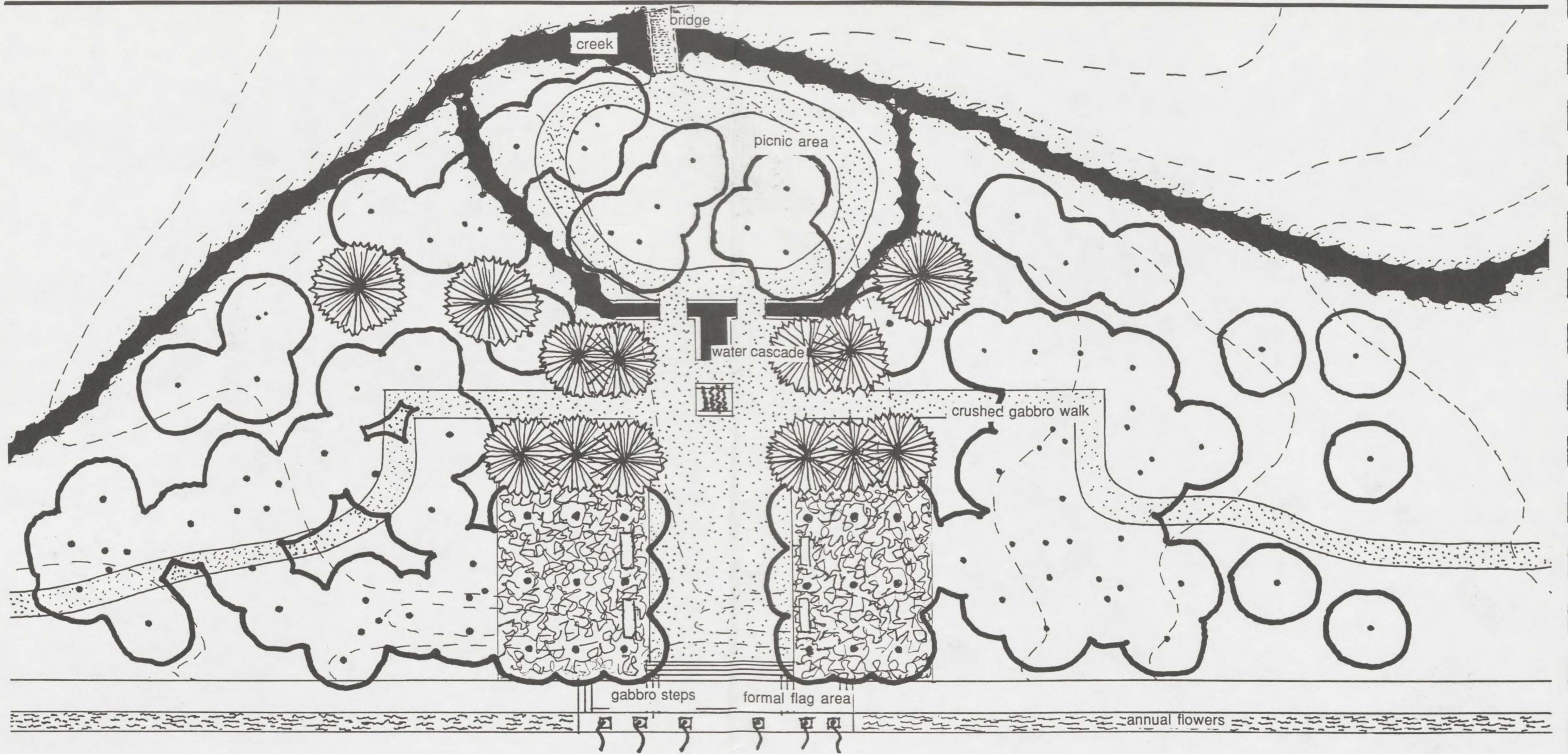
The flags themselves are located adjacent to the street and walk. They are part of a raised stepping stone area that serves both as a place to sit and as an entry into the site. Birch trees planted at equal intervals with a native groundcover underneath create a formally arranged outdoor room. To the north of the birches are balsam fir trees. The floor of this room, along with all of the paths within the flag knoll area, is covered with a finely crushed Duluth gabbro gravel. At the intersection of the paths and the formal birch room is a water fountain. The fountain is constructed from the same Duluth gabbro stone used throughout the design. The water runs back toward the creek bed

through constructed channels along the path, serving as a guide through the flag knoll area and leading to the footbridge. The footbridge across the creek bed connects the Veteran's nursing home to the flag knoll area.



Conceptual plan for Outer Drive, Formal Concept



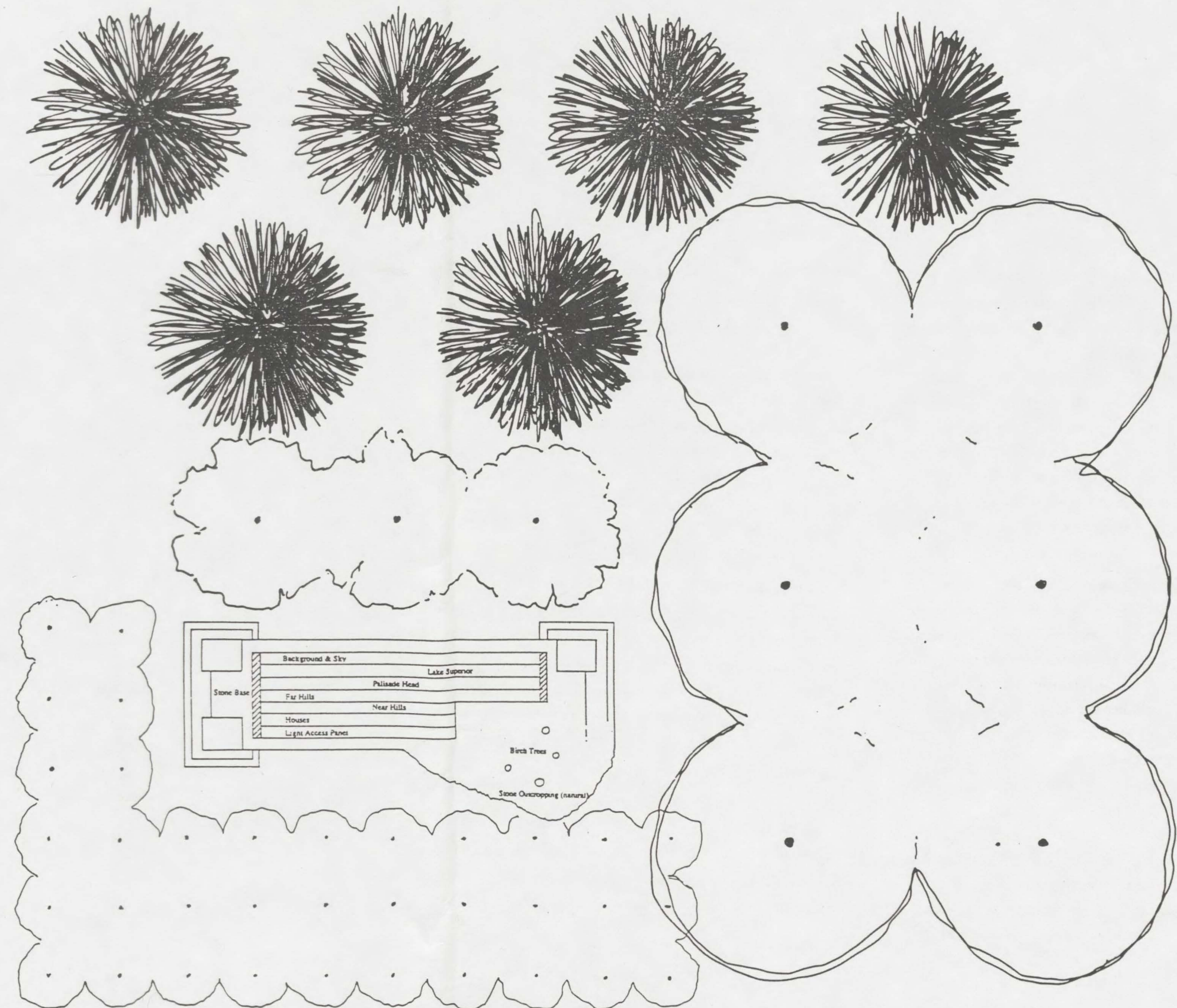


Outer Drive

Conceptual plan for flag knoll, Formal Concept



In this example, the planting around the sign is similar to the flag knoll area in its formal arrangement of native plant species. A backdrop for the sign is created with balsam fir and mountain ash trees. Three birch trees stand between the sign and balsam firs. An evenly spaced planting of mountain maple surrounds the front and side of the sign.

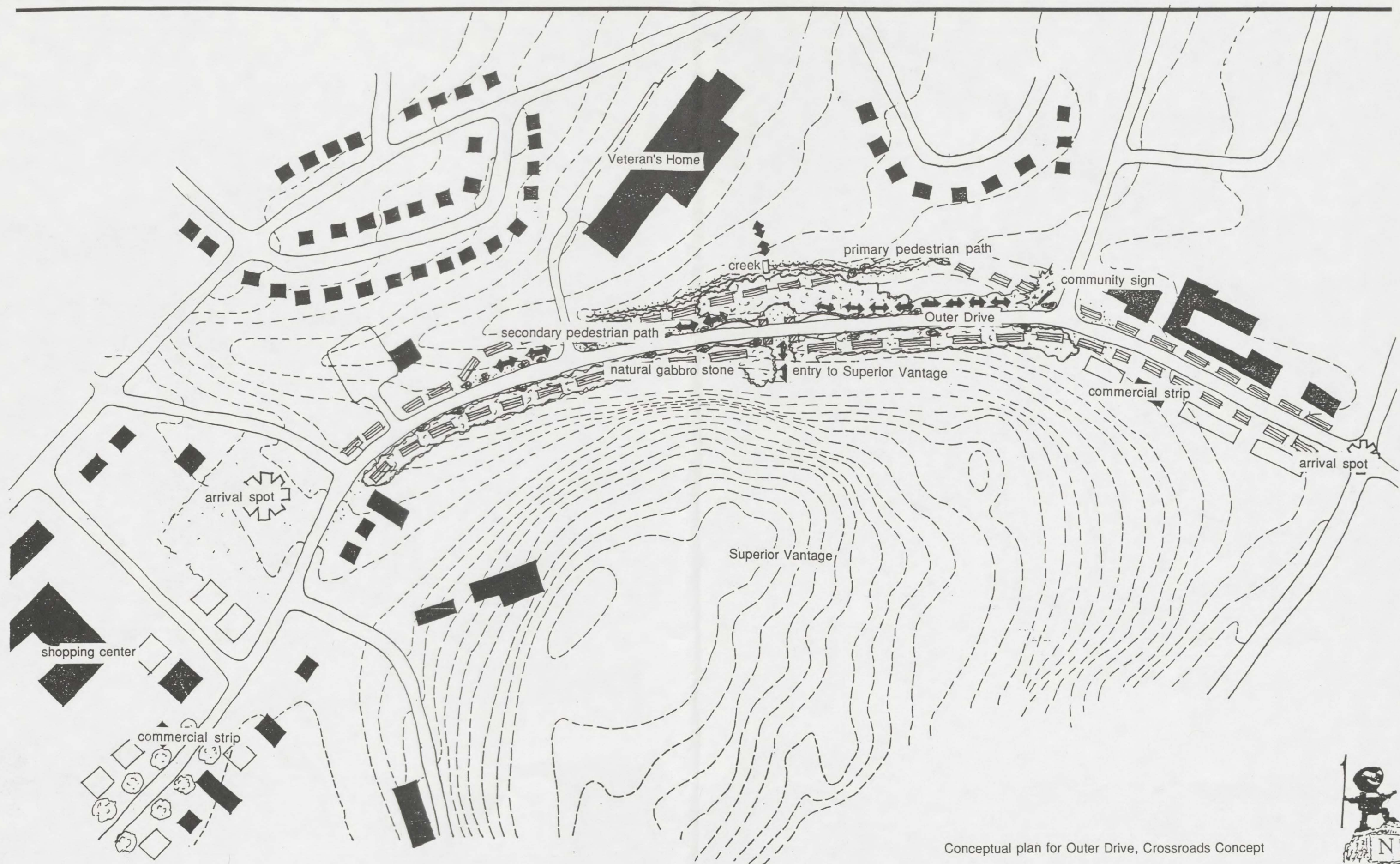


The second concept is called the *crossroads* concept. The name comes from the crossroads formed by the intersection of two paths: one, Outer Drive, and two, the walking trail that connects Superior Vantage and the flag knoll. New commercial development near the intersection of Hwy. 61 and Outer Drive will help to visually frame the entrance to Silver Bay. Large blocks of native gabbro stone placed along both sides of Outer Drive help guide visitors into the city. Lighting each block of stone at night will result in a dramatic night entry drive. At the top of the hill Outer Drive is again visually framed by buildings arranged in a commercial strip. Street trees and continuous building set-backs are suggested to help make the outdoor environment feel more comfortable for shoppers. The major pedestrian paths are again guided through the flag knoll area on walking trails, and rows of trees line the sidewalk on the south side of Outer Drive. The path through the flag knoll area crosses the creek bed several times in order to accent the importance of a harmonious relationship with the natural systems in the area.

Near the flag knoll, auto pull over and parking areas have been created on both sides of the street. A path that connects the flag knoll area to Superior Vantage begins here, forming a crossroad where it crosses Outer Drive.

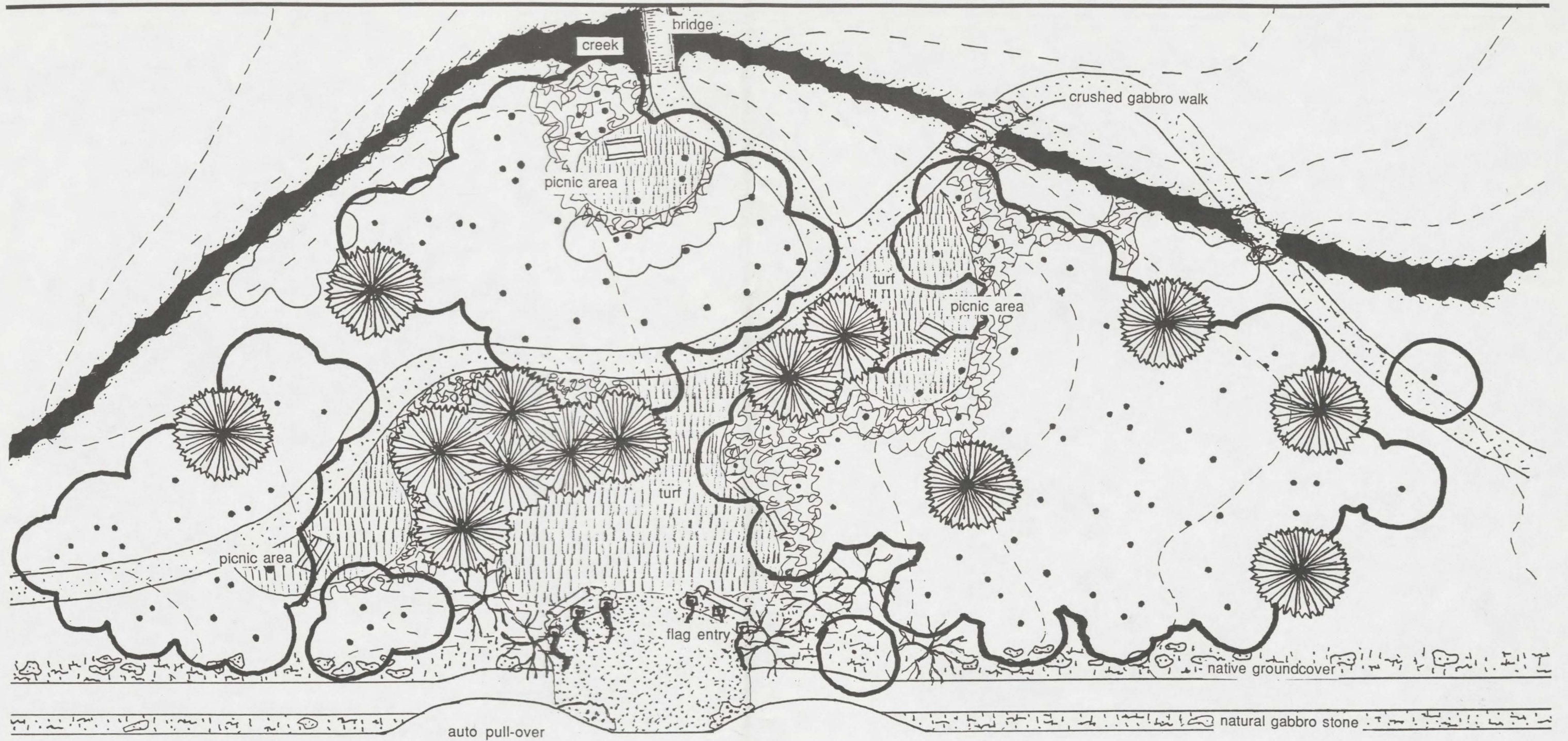
The crossroad concept creates a strong visual connection between the flag knoll area and Outer Drive. The flags become part of the entrance portal to the flag knoll, with three flags on each side of the entrance walkway. Mountain ash trees planted on both sides of the street help to define the crossroads, as well as further strengthen the entrance to the flag knoll. The entrance walkway leads into a room formed by balsam fir and birch trees. The floor of this room and the picnic areas is covered with turfgrass. The paths are again covered with a finely crushed native gabbro gravel. A footbridge connects the flag knoll area to the Veteran's Home. Native groundcover is used on both sides of the paths throughout the flag knoll. The same groundcover(s) are planted around the base of the community sign, helping to guide visitors into the flag knoll. Some possible groundcover plants include: bush honeysuckle, bunchberry, sarsparilla, asters and bearberry.

In this design concept, the trail to Superior Vantage is created along the Lake Superior side of radio tower hill in order to give visitors a first hand look at Silver Bay nestled into its surroundings.



Conceptual plan for Outer Drive, Crossroads Concept



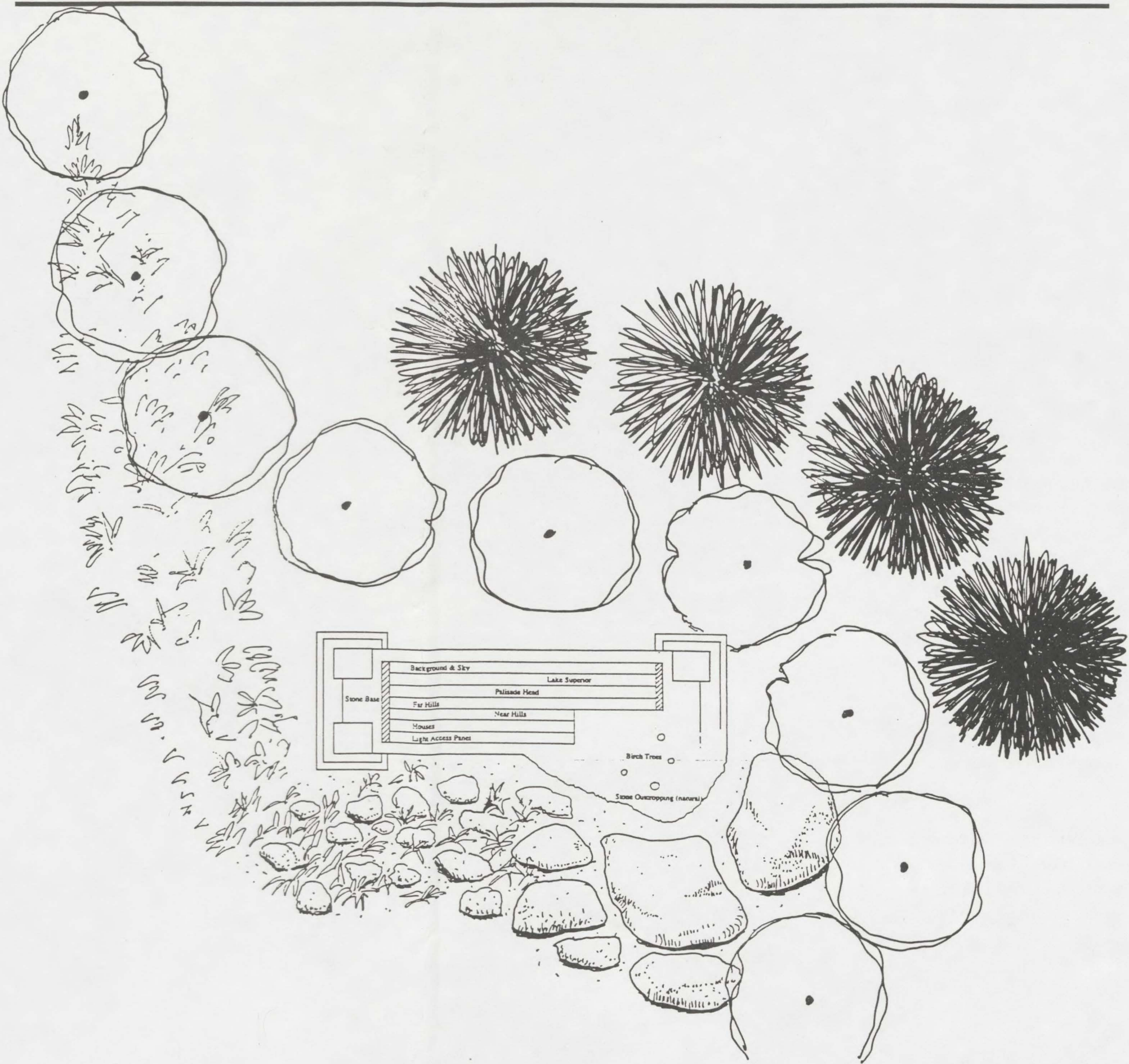


Conceptual plan for flag knoll, Crossroads Concept



The Crossroads Sign Planting

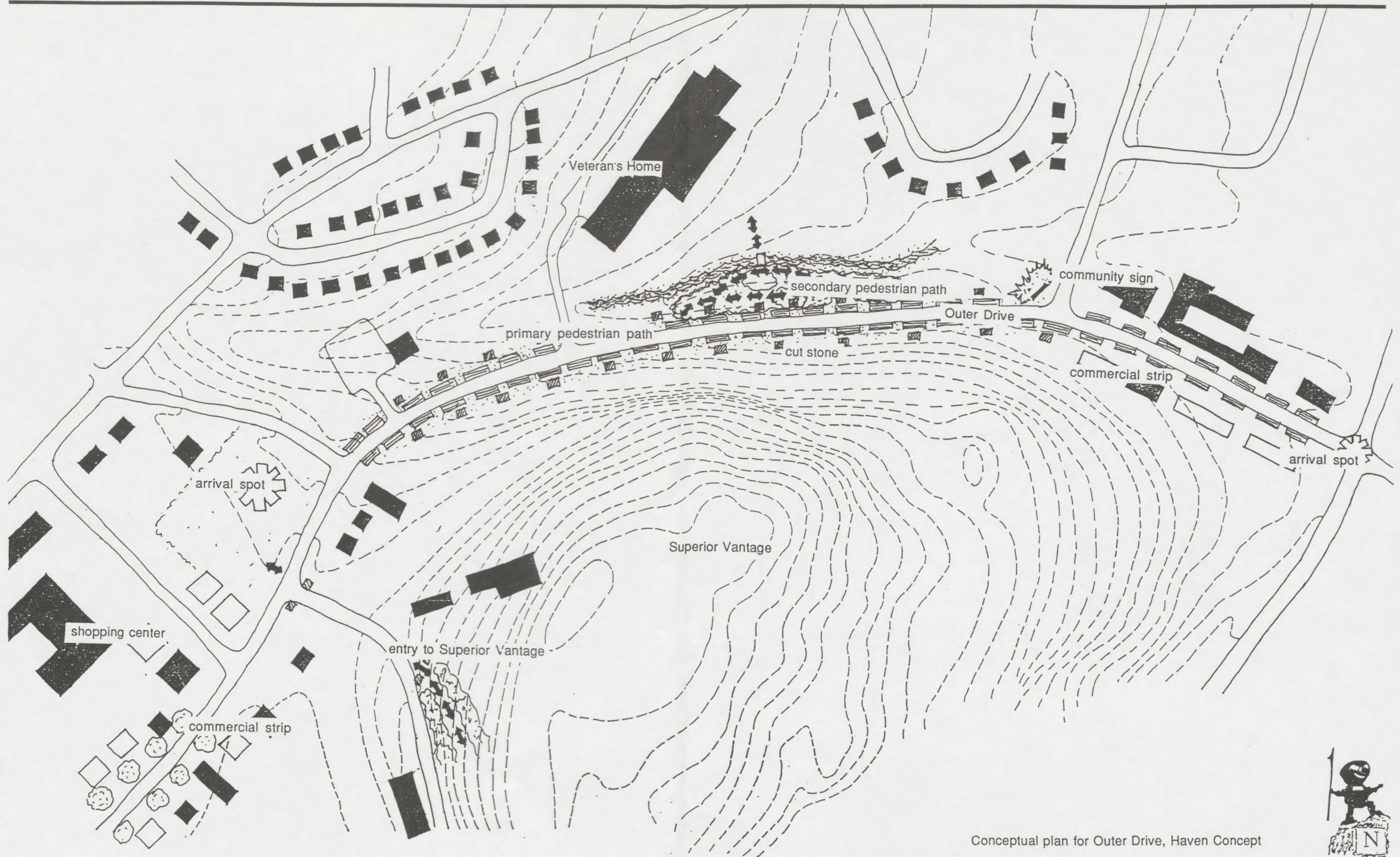
In this example, a native groundcover starts in front of the sign among the uncut stone pieces and continues along Outer Drive to the flag knoll area. A single row of birches wraps around the opposite side of the sign and also continues along Outer Drive. Balsam fir create a year-round backdrop for the sign.



The third concept is called the *haven* concept. The flag knoll area is not as noticeable from the street in this concept, and Outer Drive is given a more controlled look. Visitors to the flag knoll will feel more protected and separated from Outer Drive. Buildings at either end of Outer Drive again help to frame the entrance into the city. The gabbro basalt stone is placed at regular intervals along Outer Drive, however, these pieces of stone have been cut into rectangularly shaped blocks. Again, night lighting of these stone blocks will result in an unusual and dramatic night entrance drive. The main pedestrian paths in this concept are sidewalks along both sides of Outer Drive. The circular path through the flag knoll area is accessible from the sidewalk, but does not replace it as in the other concepts. The trail to Superior Vantage remains in its present location, but its entrance is accented with mountain ash tree plantings.

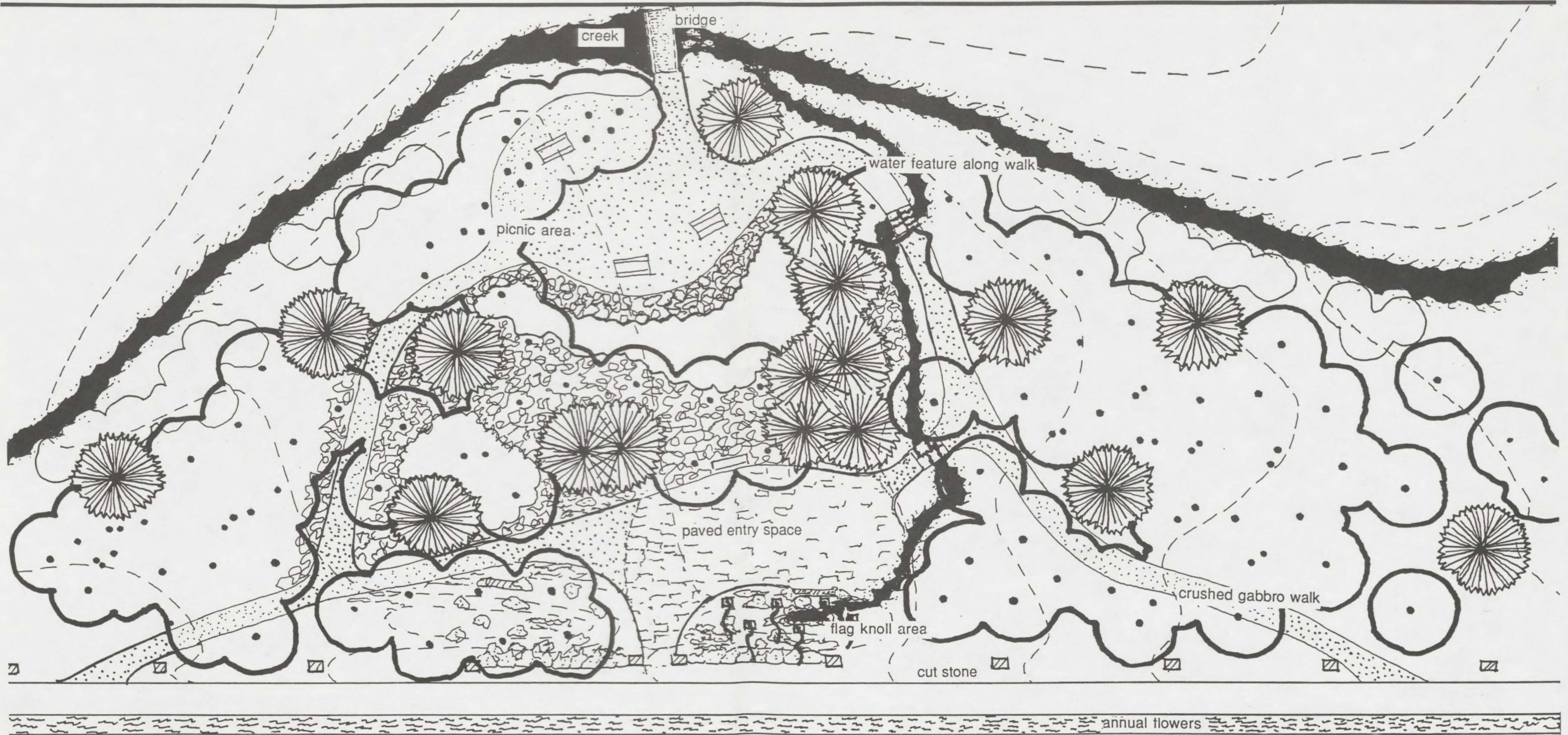
The design for the flag knoll requires the least amount of changes compared to the other concepts. The majority of the trees have been left in place, and a minimum amount of grading changes to the

topography will be necessary. The flags are grouped together on a small knoll similar to the trees and outlooks grouped together on Superior Vantage. The outdoor room near the flags is paved with native gabbro stone cut into paving blocks or pavers, and represents the city of Silver Bay carved out of its surrounding wilderness. Water, pumped up from the creek, flows from the base of the flag poles and follows crushed gravel paths to a picnic area near the bridge to the Veteran's home. The picnic area is a large room which contains mountain maple and other native shrubs and groundcovers.



Conceptual plan for Outer Drive, Haven Concept

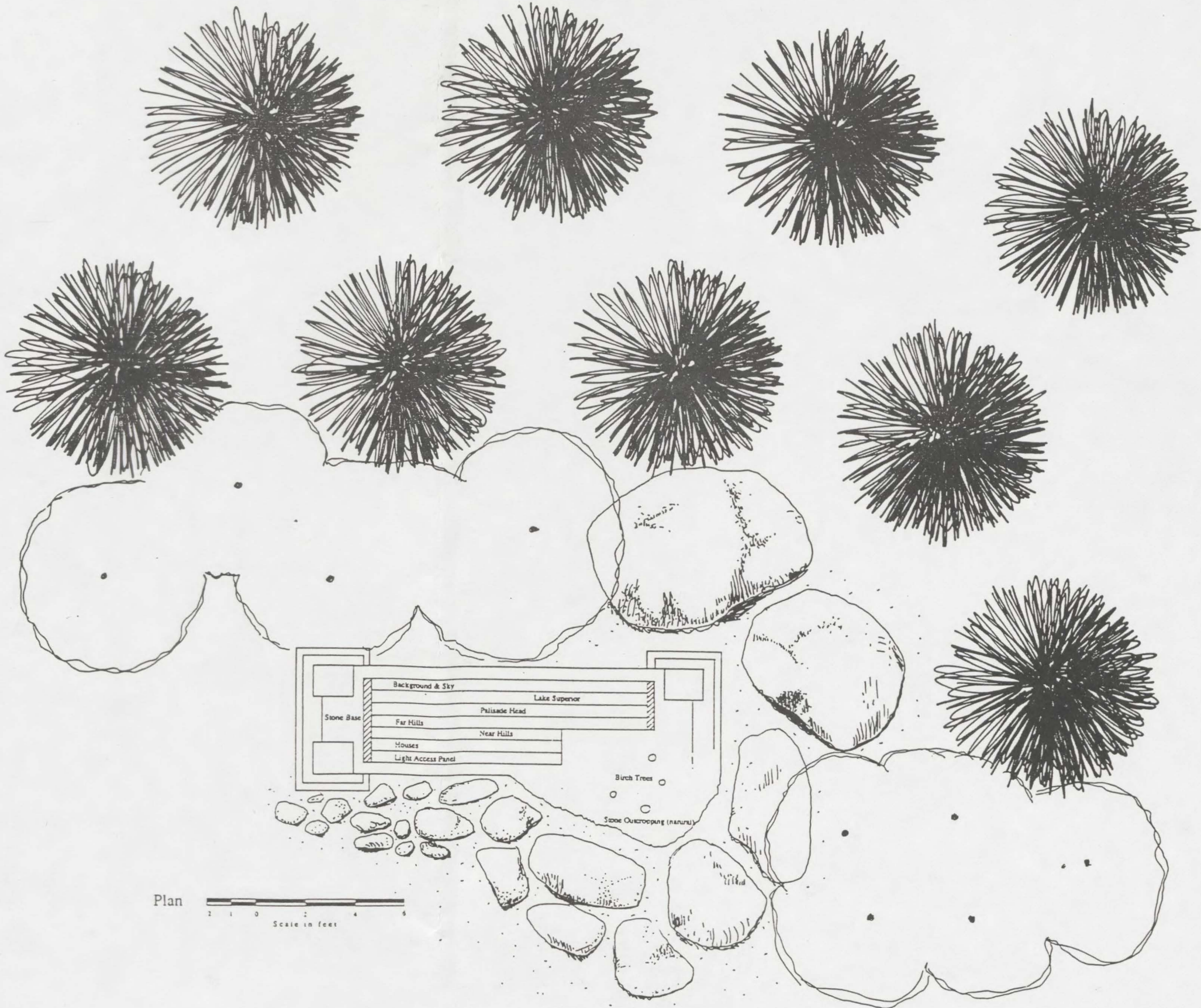




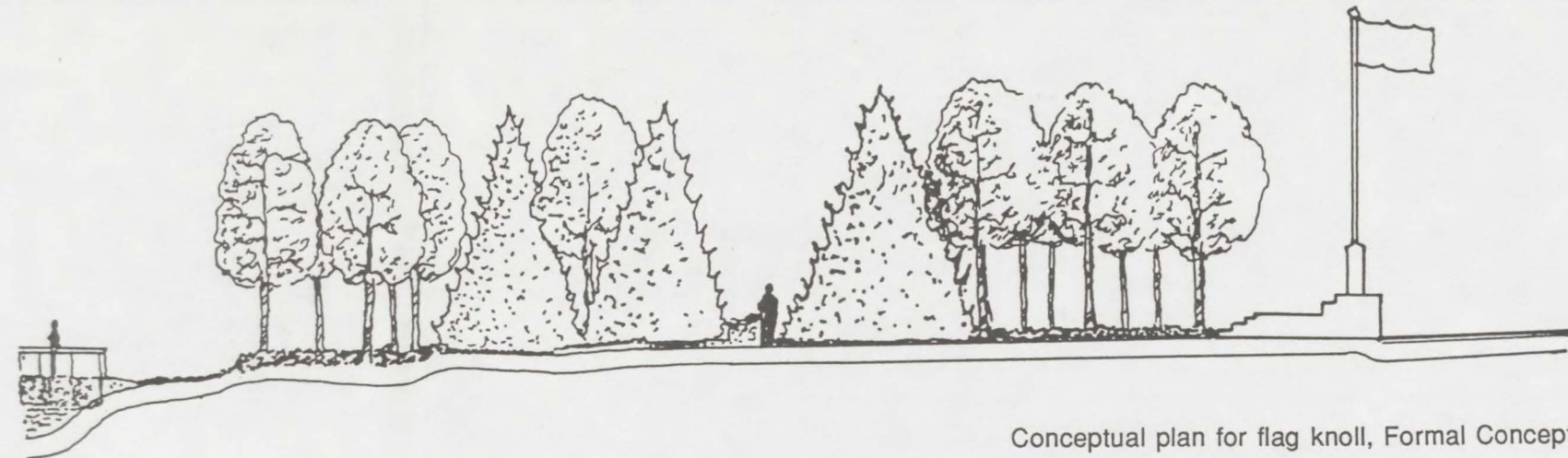
Conceptual plan for flag knoll, Haven Concept



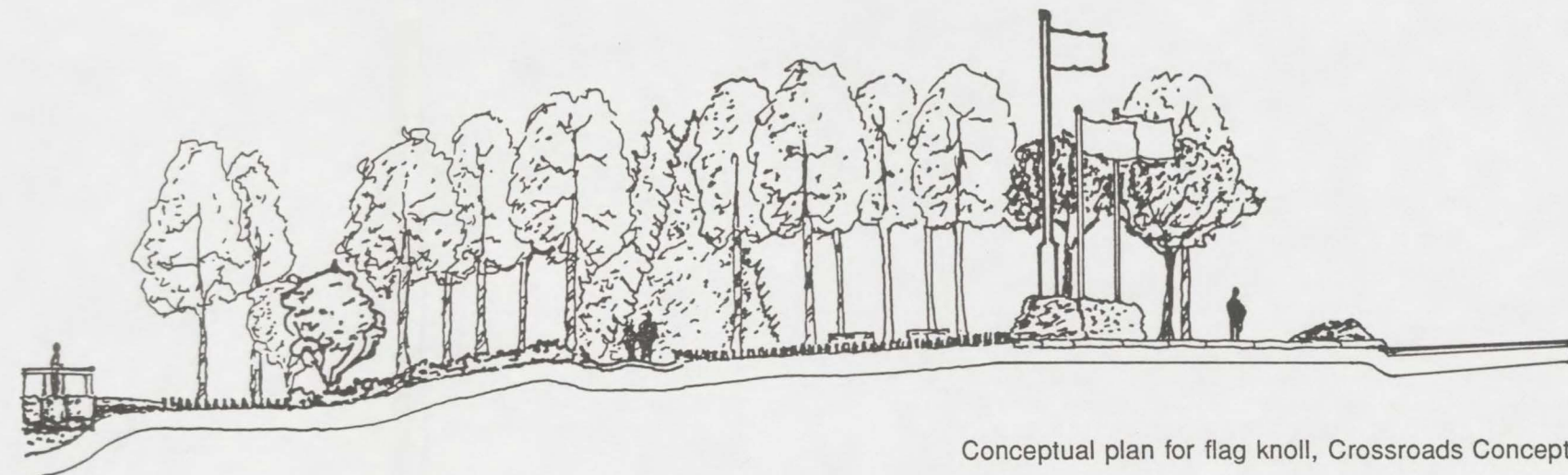
In this example, balsam fir and birch trees are strategically placed around the sign to provide a backdrop and visual frame. Uncut pieces of native stone surround two sides of the sign. The stones increase in size toward the back of the sign. This planting is intended to echo the basic elements of the area's natural features: birch, fir and stone.



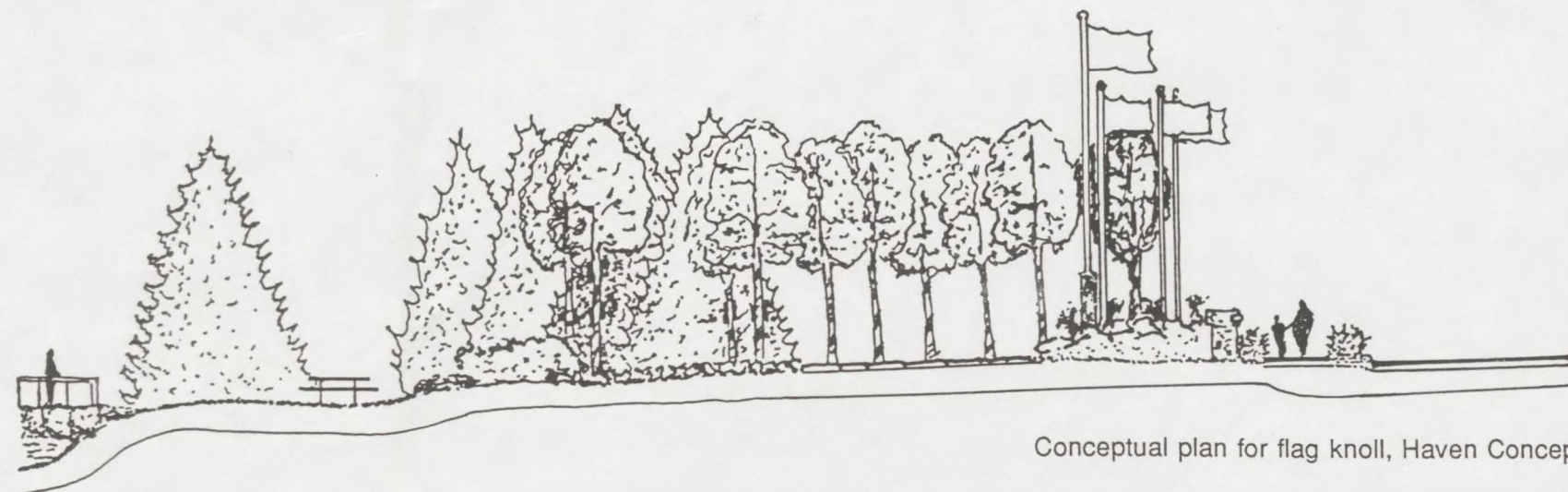
Over the course of this project, we have gained an increasing appreciation for the wealth of resources and indigenous qualities that the community of Silver Bay can use in their projects. The community has inspired the ideas presented here. We hope these ideas become an impetus for Silver Bay to develop a strategy for communicating a community image that will coordinate every project giving each a sense of purpose and quality, and making them part of a unified image as they are implemented over time. We hope the ideas will be used in the spirit they are intended; neither something that can nor should be built tomorrow, but a vision that can be worked toward carefully.



Conceptual plan for flag knoll, Formal Concept



Conceptual plan for flag knoll, Crossroads Concept



Conceptual plan for flag knoll, Haven Concept